

STATEMENT OF
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SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE MARINE CORPS
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COMMITTEE

The individual Marine is our greatest asset, and keeping faith with Marines, Sailors and their families remains one of the four institutional priorities of our Corps, both now and into the future. As such, and rightfully so, Marines will be treated with dignity and respect. Fidelity is at the heart of who we are as Marines and defines how we treat each other. In contrast, hazing is a societal problem which, though not unique to the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy or the Marine Corps, nonetheless erodes the trust and confidence placed in the Armed Forces when it happens. Marine Corps Senior Leadership and our policy maintain the firm and unwavering position that a substantiated act of hazing is a crime that is inconsistent with our core values and organizational purpose of *making Marines, winning our nation's battles and returning quality citizens* upon completion of their service. Combating hazing has a four-fold approach: 1) **Engaged Leadership** 2) **Policies** 3) **Training** and 4) **Accountability**.

First and foremost, hazing is a leadership issue. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has charged all leaders, from the fire team level to commanding general, to ensure that all Marines are treated with dignity, care and respect. We further charge leaders, who are closest to the day-to-day actions of Marines, to be ever vigilant for signs and instances of hazing and to intervene, report and address them immediately when they occur. Hazing also is a war-fighting issue, destroying the confidence and trust Marines place in each other and in our leadership and undermining unit cohesion and combat readiness. It does not promote loyalty, does not build esprit de corps and does not prepare Marines for combat.

From a policy standpoint, the Marine Corps maintains a longstanding order governing matters of hazing. This policy, updated earlier this year, defines hazing and the many ways that it can manifest itself in the force. The most common example involves initiation or congratulatory acts. Hazing also includes any conduct whereby a military member or members,

regardless of service or rank, without proper authority causes another military member or members, regardless of service or rank, to suffer or be exposed to any activity which is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning or harmful. Regardless of the form it takes, hazing is always unacceptable. The Marine Corps is committed both to preventing hazing and to holding transgressors accountable for their actions so that Marines and Sailors are afforded an opportunity to excel and to leverage their diverse talents for the benefit of our Service.

Our primary tool to combat hazing is our Values-Based Leadership program. Values Based Leadership is the process by which we indoctrinate Marines with our core values—Honor, Courage and Commitment—and establish our institutional expectations for their moral and ethical behavior. The explicit purpose of Values-Based Leadership is to provide a framework to shape young American men and women by defining, refining, and etching Marine Corps values and ethics, forged over 236 years of existence, into their very character. Values-Based Leadership is a comprehensive approach that continues throughout a Marine's career, with the ultimate goal of enabling him or her to make correct choices, even in the midst of the most morally challenging of all human environments—combat.

Our Values-Based Leadership program specifically addresses the issue of hazing. It begins at boot camp and is sustained and reinforced throughout a Marine's career, linking values and ethical decision-making to every aspect of a Marine's life. All Marines, officer and enlisted, receive instruction on Marine Corps policy prohibiting hazing during their respective entry-level training courses. At boot camp, recruits receive over 31 hours of Values-Based Training, including instruction on anti-hazing policies. At Officer Candidates School, candidates receive over 48 hours of Values-Based Training, including instruction on the policy prohibiting hazing. Enlisted Marines continue their training at follow-on schools in the Infantry Training Battalion

with an additional 12 hours of Values-Based instruction. Officers receive an additional 16 hours of Values-Based instruction at The Basic School.

When Marines join the Operating Forces, they continue to receive instruction on the policy prohibiting hazing through an annual training requirement outlined in Marine Corps Bulletin 1500. Additionally, Marines attending professional military education courses receive rank-appropriate training on hazing with a focus on leadership and enforcement of policy. This continuum of instruction—all told some 10 or more instances during an average Marine's career—creates a comprehensive approach that ensures that hazing and all other Values-Based training subjects will be addressed with maximum frequency throughout a Marine's career.

Lastly, our force holds those suspected of hazing accountable. Through legal mechanisms inherent in the Uniform Code of Military Justice, commanders are directed pursuant to Rules for Court Martial to investigate and address substantiated cases where hazing occurs or is suspected. Over the decades, the Marine Corps has taken aggressive steps to discipline and remove those from our ranks who have been found guilty of mistreating their fellow Marines by acts of hazing. We continue to foster an environment where enforcement of all appropriate policies and regulations against hazing remains a readily-accessible tool for ensuring discipline in the force.

As stated earlier, hazing is contrary to our core values. We expect and demand that Marines epitomize all that is good about our nation and to personify the ideals upon which it was founded. Our storied emphasis on tradition in the Marine Corps has nothing whatsoever to do with hurting or humiliating another through cruel rites of passage or physical and verbal abuse. Yet, it has everything to do with Marines exhibiting mutual respect, a strength of character and a

willingness to sacrifice for one another. Honor, Courage, and Commitment are not just words; they frame the way Marines must live and act.